

## SERVICE CENTER UPDATE

## Service Centers Continue to Blossom

## Orlando Service Center

**Spring and water conservation are in the air at Epcot**

As gardeners spring into action, brightening up their flower beds and landscapes, the International Flower and Garden Festival at Disney World's Epcot is leading the way with gardening tips and information on how to develop a lush waterwise landscape. For this year's festival, the District is building on its three-year partnership with Disney and RainBird Corp., to demonstrate how a water-wise garden can be beautiful, bountiful and conserve water.



Young guests of Epcot's WaterFull World Garden create rubbings of animal paw prints while their parents relax by the stream meandering through the garden. Working in partnership with RainBird Corp., the South Florida Water Management District is helping staff the WaterFull World Garden to demonstrate the water saving benefits of efficient irrigation practices and Florida-friendly landscaping.

"The beauty of this partnership is that thousands of Epcot's guests will see firsthand how efficient irrigation techniques and Florida-friendly plants can work together to create beautiful gardens and landscapes," said Harkley Thornton, Central Florida's representative on the District Governing Board.

Bordered by a running river fed by a spring boil, the "WaterFull World Garden" offers guests a relaxing hideaway and tips on how to upgrade existing irrigation systems to make them efficient and more effective, how and why waterfront homeowners should maintain the near-shore vegetation in lakes and streams, and how human activities imperil a variety of endangered animals. The International Flower and Garden Festival runs from April 15 through June 5.

## Lower West Coast Service Center

**District celebrates Charlotte Harbor**

The annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival celebrates Charlotte Harbor and its watershed. Approximately 4,000 people attended the January 29 event at which the District had a booth featuring water conservation materials. The

Native Plant Society used the District's WaterWise Plant Guide in the agency's presentations and demonstrations.



Freddy the Friendly Alligator kicks up his heels with Charlotte County Planner Inga Williams in the children's tent at the festival. Freddy made other stops at the children's tent as he distributed District literature and entertained.

## Florida Keys Service Center

**Partnership encourages visitors to conserve water**

In honor of Water Conservation Month (April), the District kicked off a linen reuse program for lodging properties throughout the Keys as part of a partnership with the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority. Given the strong tourism industry in Monroe County, the District recognized that overnight visitors to the Keys can play a pivotal role in conserving water if they are informed of the need and given the tools to do so. About 70 percent of guests participate in linen reuse programs when given the opportunity. Simply reusing sheets and towels makes a large impact (a 100-room hotel typically saves 6,000 gallons of water monthly). Hotels also save money in utility bills, labor and material costs. This is a win-win opportunity for the environment and the economy.



## Big Cypress Basin Service Center

**Program recognized by the Governor**

Florida Gulf Coast University teacher Ricky Pires teaches a "Connections Class" that pairs FGC sophomore students with elementary school classes. The college students teach the elementary students about the environment and how people are connected to it. The Connections Class also includes information on water conservation, District careers and the Everglades. For the past two years, the District has provided funding for the program.



Gov. Jeb Bush and Florida Gulf Coast University teacher Ricky Pires admire a quilt created by Panther Posse elementary students to raise awareness of the endangered Florida panther. Gov. Bush has asked Ms. Pires to help promote these programs outside of Florida. The District is a sponsor of the program.

The Panther Posse, whose mission is to show that if the Florida panther is saved, its water and habitat is also protected, is the elementary-level component of the program. A quilt created by the Panther Posse students to draw attention to the panther and their program will be displayed in the state capitol. It was signed by the program partners: students on the elementary and college level, the Big Cypress Basin Board members, District staff and elected officials for southwest Florida.

## Palm Beach County Service Center

**New director joins Palm Beach Service Center**

Fred Rapach has joined the District as director of the Palm Beach County Service Center. Rapach has vast experience in policy and planning efforts associated with water resources and land use. In this leadership position he will act as the key liaison between the regional agency and Palm Beach County governments, as well as overseeing outreach to local businesses and community groups.

A familiar face at District headquarters, Rapach worked for Palm Beach County Water Utilities for the last 19 years. Most recently he served as Program and Policy Coordinator where he assisted with program development, evaluated and prepared proposed legislation, and presented the water utility's position to technical advisory and regulatory planning groups, including the South Florida Water Management District, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"I look forward to the opportunity to continue facilitating collaborative problem-solving partnerships and to further strengthen the District's relationship with Palm Beach County's diverse communities," Rapach said.



Palm Beach County Service Center Director Fred Rapach

## Okeechobee Service Center

**WaterFest 2005 raises water conservation awareness**

Neither rain nor clouds could dampen the enthusiasm of those who attended the first Okeechobee County FUN (Families Understanding Nature) WaterFest held April 2 and 3 at the Okee-Tantie Campground and Marina. More than 1,000 people attended the entertaining and educational two-day event, sponsored by the District, Okee-Tantie Campground and Marina and the Okeechobee County Tourist Development Council.



The young and young at heart join Earthman & The Planet Earth Project H2O Concert Tour group in singing and dancing to songs that expressed appreciation for conserving water resources and protecting the environment.

Fifteen hands-on education stations taught participants the value of protecting water resources. Education partners included Arnold's Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility, Future Farmers of America Osceola Middle School chapter, Okeechobee County and Highlands County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Atlantic University's Center for Environmental Studies, Okeechobee Coast Guard Auxiliary, Okeechobee County Sheriff's Department Crime and Search and Rescue Units, and the Pegasus Service Unit of Girl Scouts.